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Crippled CIA is seen as danger to Western world

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London—The United States' crippling of its own intelligence capacity already has endangered the security of the non-Communist world—and it could get worse, a report just published here warns.

"At the very moment when the U.S. has been decisively restricting its intelligence capability, the Soviets have been expanding such operations in a global strategic context," said David Rees, a senior fellow of the highly respected Institute for the Study of Conflict. "Continuation of this folly could place the West in great jeopardy," he declared.

Mr. Rees's analysis has an overall tone of dismay that a country like the United States can continue on what he regards as a self-destructive path in the face of the shift of the global military balance to Moscow and the upsurge of international subversion and terrorism—much of it Soviet-inspired—in the last decade.

Mr. Rees said the straitjacket imposed by legislative and executive acts on the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency and the FBI was unmatched by any other Western country.

And to make it worse, he said, "As far as can be assessed, informed opinion within the country remains apparently hostile or at least indifferent to the new problems facing its intelligence community."

Mr. Rees, 51, said that he spent many years as a writer for British newspapers and magazines in London before joining the institute in 1976. He is the author of a history of the Korean War and has written four studies on Korea, as well as reports on Soviet sea power and strategic penetration of Africa.

The institute, a private think-tank, was established in 1970 to provide concentrated research on areas of low-intensity warfare throughout the world. Its staff is made up of academics and former military men who have taken up research and teaching. It is financed primarily by multinational corporations based in the United States, Britain, France and West Germany.

The Rees report pointed out that while the United States has become preoccupied with the technology of intelligence-gathering, the Soviets have continued to attach great importance to the individual morale and perception of agents in intelligence work.

Mr. Rees said that while it is reportedly the view in the highest American intelligence circles that mechanical intelligence-gathering and analysis will suffice, "the lesson of the past is that both in agent handling and in operational analysis there is no better and no more effective quality than good human insight and intelligence."

There can be no significant repair of the damage done the American intelligence apparatus without a shift in public and congressional opinion, Mr. Rees concluded.

Mr. Rees said certain legislative measures to change the present completely restrictive practices would benefit not only American interests but the long-term interests of her allies and others who depend on the United States.

He suggested that the revival of the House Internal Security Committee would provide a continuing legislative inquiry into subversion and international terrorism as it affects the United States.

Mr. Rees also said the hastily passed Hughes-Ryan amendment that imposed stringent rules on CIA covert operations should be repealed, and guidelines should be modified to allow long-term surveillance, within the law, of subversive groups.

He also recommended that the Freedom of Information Act be changed, attaching a seven-year moratorium on releasing confidential information and files to the public.

"These are minimal measures if American security is to cope adequately with the challenges, internal and external, of an increasingly dangerous world," he said.

All Western intelligence services exist as means to an end of national security, Mr. Rees said, and the need for their protection in a dangerous world has not changed because of their past mistakes, or even crimes.

Mr. Rees suggested that the most sinister aspect of the American intelligence crisis is that while the United States has curbed itself to an unprecedented extent, "the Soviet-bloc security services . . . remain unaltered. So, in contrast to the U.S. attitude, the Soviet Union puts increasing stress on secret operations as an integral part of its program of achieving global victory."

The restrictions imposed on the intelligence and security agencies ignore the whole history of revolutionary subversion where ideology invariably incubates violence over a period, Mr. Rees said, and in the field of external security the effects have been even more drastically to American disadvantage.

Moscow indisputably represents a serious threat to the West, he continued, because of its active support of espionage, subversion and terrorism against democratic societies—in many disguises.

This, he said, underlines the fact that internal security in the West is complementary to national defense and the need is vital for the best possible intelligence capability.

Mr. Rees agreed that some reforms in the United States security services were needed by the mid-1970s, but too great a reaction is detrimental to both American and Western security.

The "foreign policy consensus" on the need to contain Soviet power collapsed in the bitter division of the Vietnam War, followed by the Watergate disclosures of the Nixon administration's illegal use of internal intelligence methods.